DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 004 FL 011 916

TITLE	TEFL/TESL Newsletter, Volume 4, Number 1.
INSTITUTION	Australian Dept. of Education, Canberra. Language Teaching Branch.
PUB DATE	Feb 79
NOTE	61p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Bilingual Education; Communicative Competence (Languages); Course Organization; *English (Second Language); Hungarian; *Second Language Instruction; Small Group Instruction; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	Hungary

ABSTRACT

Several articles of interest to teachers of English as a second language (ESL) are included. In "Syllabus Design and the Adult Beginner," Keith Johnson discusses the various choices the course organizer must make to make a syllabus communicative. Among the ideas for "Developing Writing Skills" offered by Patricia A. Denham are fully controlled exercises, structurally determined exercises, model based writing, cue based writing, and topic based writing. Elizabeth Joiner presents several "Communicative Activities for Beginning Language Students." E. F. Austin and S. Galvin examine a specific adult ESL course in use in Australia in "'All's Well That Starts Well': An Evaluation." Finally, Alan S. Milne addresses the problem of heterogeneous ESL classes in "Coping with Different Language Levels: Small Group Work." (JB)

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Vol. 4 No. 1 February 1979

TEFL/TESL NEWSLETTER

ED200004

FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND IDEAS
ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND
OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN AUSTRALIA

CONTENTS

Editorial		iii
Keith Johnson	Syllabus design and the adult beginner	1
Patricia A. Denham	Developing writing skills	11
A.J. Grassby	Hungarian journey	25
Elizabeth Joiner	Communicative activities for beginning language students	38
E.F. Austin and S. Galvin	"All's well that starts well": an evaluation	45
Alan S. Milne	Coping with different language levels: small group work	49

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EDITORIAL

The present issue of the TEFL/TESL Newsletter includes two interesting articles from overseas. Both of them are concerned with communication. While Elizabeth Joiner's "Communicative activities for beginning language students" (from the US Journal, Forum of English Teaching) looks at communication teaching techniques, the article reprinted from the British Modern English Teacher examines the question of syllabus - how we might organise the language to be taught.

Considerable variety is lent to this issue by the other contributions, from South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT. We are pleased also to be able to include an account by the Hon. A.J. Grassby, Australia's Commissioner for Community Relations, of impressions received during a visit to Hungary last year.

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Your contributions to the Newsletter are always eagerly sought. The function of this journal is to facilitate the interchange of ideas and information among teachers of ESL/EFL. If you have produced materials you would like to share with others, they too may well be suitable for inclusion in these pages.

SYLLABUS DESIGN AND THE ADULT BEGINNER

*Keith Johnson

This article is about syllabus design. In the past, syllabus design was a rather restricted subject, because all syllabuses were designed in (more or less) the same way. The grammatical structure was used as the 'unit of organisation', and the syllabus designer's task was simply to decide in which order he would present the students with the various structures he had decided to teach. Syllabuses organised in this way are known as 'structural syllabuses'.

Recently, the syllabus designer has been presented with alternative 'units of organisation', and the result has been to make syllabus design one of the most interesting issues in language teaching today. What are these alternative 'units of organisation'? The most common ones are the topic, the setting, the notion and the function; and nowadays we are beginning to see teaching materials which are organised in such a way that each lesson deals, not with one grammatical structure, but with one topic (like 'education' or 'travel'), one setting (like 'the railway station' or 'the bank'), one notion (like 'size', or 'frequency'), one function (like 'greeting' or 'inviting'). To distinguish this breed of syllabus from the more traditional structure syllabus, we can call it the 'semantic syllabus'.

Recently a number of textbooks have appeared - and there are others about to appear - which use a semantic syllabus design for courses intended to teach zero adult beginners. In this article I should like to ask some questions about the desirability of this type of design for the adult beginner learner. I should like to put in a good word (a rare thing

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* Keith Johnson has taught English in Yugoslavia, Italy and Malta. He is currently working at the Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading, U.K. His work includes materials production, particularly in connection with a pre-sessional English Language Course. With Keith Morrow, he is co-author of Communicate (CUP forthcoming), and other functional materials. This article is a revised version of a paper given at the BAAL Annual General Meeting, held in Colchester (September 1977), and appears by courtesy of Modern English Teacher, 6,2, March, 1978.

nowadays) for the traditional structural syllabus, and to try to argue that we can write courses which teach adult beginner students to communicate, yet which are organised in a structural way. For the purposes of argument I shall talk mainly about that type of semantic syllabus which takes the function as its 'unit of organisation' - the functional syllabus - though what I shall say will apply just as well to the other types of semantic syllabus.

THE ZERO ADULT BEGINNER

There is one very persuasive argument against the use of functional syllabuses at the zero adult beginner level. It is that if we organise our teaching in a functional way, this automatically implies a structural disorganisation. For example, if in one lesson of our functional course we set out to teach our students how to invite, accept and decline invitations, it is surely inevitable that we introduce into that lesson a number of different grammatical structures, all mixed up and not graded at all. Now, everyone would surely agree that learning to communicate involves learning grammar. If our students are to communicate properly, then they must be able to produce sentences which are grammatically correct. Most of us would go further than this and say that at the beginner level (though perhaps not at later levels) the grammar of the language must be presented to the student in a clear and graded way. A functional syllabus cannot do this: different structures of different complexity are introduced in the same lesson. So how can anyone defend the use of this type of syllabus for beginners?

I have not heard a convincing argument against this, though I think it would be possible to find one. We could take issue with the statement that a functional organisation means structural disorganisation. We could say that it is possible to write a series of units on functions like greeting, inviting, making arrangements, in which all the structures have been carefully graded and explained, as they would be ~~in a~~ traditional structural course. But I find this line of attack an unconvincing one. Courses which claim to be organised in <u>both</u> a functional <u>and</u> a structural way are probably neither, and they are likely to fail to teach the students <u>both</u> how to greet, invite, make arrangements <u>and</u> how to use the grammatical structures that are introduced.

Or we can take issue with the assumption that the clear and graded presentation of structures is important. This intuitively seems like a much more fruitful sort of argument. But it is an argument that undermines an assumption that has been held by language teachers for very many years, and therefore needs careful consideration. Anecdotes are not enough. 'I learned French in France, and the structures of French weren't presented to me in a graded way' and 'I taught my students the Present Perfect in their second lesson of English, and they all seemed to grasp it' - this type of anecdotal argument is hardly evidence enough to justify a major change of direction in language teaching practice.

Actually, most people that I have heard arguing in favour of functional syllabuses for adult beginners argue in a quite different way. They do not give reasons why a functional syllabus should be used for this level, they give reasons why a structural syllabus should not. They do not say what is right with functional syllabuses, they say what is wrong with structural syllabuses. And very often their criticisms make sense. But if there are deficiencies with structural syllabuses, then surely what we should do is try to put them right, rather than abandon them for some other type of syllabus. I think that the structural syllabus has had rather a raw deal, and that many of the recent exciting insights into language teaching, connected with our efforts to teach 'communicative competence', can be used to make our structural courses more exciting and at the same time more efficient.

STRUCTURAL SYLLABUSES

What is wrong with structural syllabuses? One argument I have heard is that 'they do not allow you to see the practical applications of the language to real life'. There are several possible things that may be implied here. One is that structural textbooks teach the wrong language. That is, they teach the students structures which have little practical application in real life. E.g. sentences like 'If he hadn't have come, I wouldn't have been able to warn him', and 'There's no reason why he shouldn't have done it, if he had wanted to'.

It is certainly true that some structural textbooks do err in this direction. And, where this happens, the reason is usually because the

syllabus designer and textbook writer is anxious that his course give a comprehensive coverage of English grammar. 'A structure exists, so it must be taught'. This is certainly wrong, and there is no doubt that when we are designing our courses, we should bear the communicative needs of our students very much in mind. 'A structure is useful, so it must be taught' seems a much more sensible criterion to use. But accepting this criterion is no motivation for changing to a semantic syllabus. If structural textbook writers have failed to consider communicative needs when deciding what structures to teach, then they can learn to do so. The answer is not to abandon structural courses on this account.

'Structural syllabuses do not allow you to see the practical applications of the language to real life'. A second thing this might mean is that although structural syllabuses teach the right language, they often teach it in the wrong situations, and being used in the wrong way. This is certainly a valid criticism. We are all familiar with materials in which the characters sit down to breakfast and say things like 'Is this a table?', 'Is this a chair?', and who, at the drop of a hat, tell us that 'the green book is under the chair' or 'John's pen is near the book'. The structures in these sentences are useful ones to teach - no one would say that the interrogative of <u>be</u>, prepositional phrases using <u>under</u> and <u>near</u>, have no application to real life! What we rightly object to is the complete inappropriacy of these sentences to the situations in which they are supposed to be uttered. Structural courses are indeed often 'situationally dishonest'; but they need not be so. Since these structures <u>do</u> have applications in real life, it should take no effort (and at the very most just a little ingenuity) to find situations where they can be used quite appropriately. The solution to situational dishonesty is not to turn the syllabus topsy turvy. All that is needed is care in the selection of the situations in which the structures we wish to teach are uttered.

Apart from being 'situationally dishonest', structural courses are also often 'functionally dishonest' as well. They often show sentences being used in the wrong ways. Here is an example of this, modelled on an actual exchange found in a textbook:

A: When does the London train leave?

B: Every half hour, and on Sundays every two hours.

In fact, if someone asked A's question, the answer he would receive would be something like '2.00' or 'ten to three'. But here the question is being used to ask about the frequency of trains. What A means (we suppose) is 'How often do trains leave for London?' If we teach our students to ask about the frequency of trains using the 'When....?' sentence, we are teaching them language which is inappropriate to the function they wish to perform. The point is that we can advocate situational and functional honesty without this implying adoption of a semantic syllabus. We would expect a functional course to be structurally accurate, and to contain language that is grammatically correct. So why shouldn't we expect a structural course to show language being used for appropriate functions in appropriate situations?

When people say that a structural approach does not allow students to see the practical applications of language to real life, a third thing they may mean is that the approach does not draw these applications to the students' attention in an explicit way. So that when we teach structures such as 'Would you like to ...?', we may not explicitly point out to the students that a common use of the structure is to invite. Actually, there is no harm in the world in the teacher pointing out to his students how the structures he is learning are used; in fact, it seems a very sound practice. But this has little to do with questions of syllabus design. Let us be clear what the issue is there. If we write a series of units, the subject of each being a function like inviting, then we are more or less bound to introduce in each unit a variety of structures. Apart from 'Would you like to...?' we might also include 'How about...?' and 'Why not....?' We would of course practise these as structures (and notice that structurally they are very different from each other), but the subject of the lesson would be 'some ways of inviting in English'. If, on the other hand, we write a series of units, the subject of each being a structure like 'Would you like to...?', then we are more or less bound to show each structure being used in a variety of ways. We might begin the lesson which covers 'Would you like to...?' by looking at the affirmative form 'I'd like to...', being used perhaps to 'express a wish'. And when we come to the interrogative we will almost certainly show it being used for more functions than simply invitation - 'asking about wishes' for example ('Would you like to be an engineer?') or 'giving a polite command' ('Would you like to close the window?'). We can certainly mention these uses to the students, but the subject of the lesson would be "the structure 'Would you like...?'"

Which of these organisations do we choose? The difference between them is that the functional organisation focuses attention on how language is used (to greet, invite and so on) - though in so doing it does give structural practice. The structural organisation focuses attention on grammar - though in so doing it can certainly point to questions of use. Our choice of one or the other depends on what we wish to emphasise at a given point in our language teaching. And at the zero beginner level, there is much to be said for focusing attention on structure. This does not mean that we ignore use; it simply means that we do not organise our teaching to make the functions of language our main focal point.

Another argument against structural syllabuses is that they are often graded in such a way that useful structures - tenses like the Present Perfect and the Simple Past, for example - are not introduced until fairly late. 'My students have been learning English for six months' a teacher may say, 'and they still haven't been introduced to the Simple Past'. There can be a good reason or a bad reason for delays of this sort. The good reason is simply the belief that following a careful structural grading is the most efficient means we have for presenting the language to the learner. It is surely quite valid to delay introduction of the Simple Past tense (for example) if we believe that the student can only master it when he understands how the auxiliary system using do is used to form interrogatives and negatives, how the contraction system, short answer forms and so on are constructed. If those who support the use of semantic syllabuses for beginners believe that the Simple Past should be introduced early, would they do so before preliminaries like these have been learned? If so, they surely run the risk that the student simply will not learn the form properly, and the haste for communicative competence will result in communicative incompetence.

The bad reason for delay would be that the syllabus designer has decided on his ordering by following the order found in grammar books. If the syllabus designer says 'We've taught the present, so now we'll teach the past' or 'We've done the indicative, so now we'll do the imperative', then he is not really justifying his ordering at all. He is just 'going through' the language structure by structure, without regard for what his students will find more or less difficult. But again, this is just bad syllabus design, and no justification at all for changing to a semantic syllabus.

This argument against structural syllabuses leads us on to another one, which is also common. Nowadays, the term 'high surrender value' is often used in connection with syllabus design. It is a term taken from the world of insurance, where it is used to describe insurance policies which give a quick return on investment. In language teaching the term is used to describe a syllabus design or a course which gives the student a high 'return' (in ability to communicate) on time invested in learning. Functional syllabuses are said to have 'high surrender value' because by the end of every lesson, the students have learned how to do something - to greet, to invite, to make arrangements and so on. Structural syllabuses are said to have 'low surrender value', because the students may learn the language for a very long time before they are actually able to use it for any communicative purpose.

Two points need to be made here. One is that high surrender value, both in language teaching and in insurance, is only useful when the return on investment does indeed need to be swift. In language teaching this is particularly true for short-term remedial courses where the students have restricted time to study the language. But this is not nearly so true of many beginners' courses. A large number of these are written for students who <u>do</u> have plenty of time to learn the language - they may be learning it at school or on evening courses going on for a number of years. In cases like these there is no 'external' pressure to have a course with high surrender value. And it pays to remember that there also exist insurance policies with <u>low</u> surrender value, and it is on these that the eventual return on investment is highest.

The second point is that though there may be no 'external' pressure on courses like these for high surrender value, there is 'internal' pressure on every course for this. Little wonder if students lose interest in learning a language if three or more years pass before they are given any practice in using the language as a system of communication, rather than simply learning it as an unapplied set of grammar rules. But can communicatively useful practice only be given in a semantic syllabus? Does using a structural syllabus automatically condemn our students to endless structural drills which have no communicative value? Surely not.

There are certainly courses on the market which, though they may be semantically designed, give no communicative practice at all. They are just elaborate phrasebooks which tell the students what to say in given situations (how to greet, invite, etc), but give them no practice in communication with each other. Similarly, there are structurally organised courses available which contain much useful practice in communication. The students pass on real messages to each other and they ask each other questions because they really want to know the answers (and not because the teacher has told them to do so). Whether or not our language teaching is 'communicative' depends as much on the methodology we use as on the syllabus design we adopt. It is wrong to assume that we can only teach communicative competence by using a functional syllabus.

Now to change the emphasis. So far we have argued that there are shortcomings in structural syllabuses, but we have said that we can eliminate these shortcomings without having to discard structural syllabuses completely (at least as far as the adult beginner is concerned). Let us now look at the question from a more positive point of view, and talk about ways in which a structural syllabus can take advantage of the many recent developments in language teaching. How, in other words, can a structural syllabus be communicative?

MAKING THE SYLLABUS COMMUNICATIVE

One of the most important advances in recent years is associated with what we call a 'communicative approach' to language teaching in general, and to the work of the Council of Europe team in particular. It is concerned with the way we look at our students' language needs, which is today both more aggressive and more 'multi-dimensional'. It is aggressive in the sense that we now ask the question 'what do our students want to use the language for?' in a serious way, and make the answer affect the actual content of our course. We make sure that the structures we introduce, the uses they are put to, and the situations they are introduced in, are those which will meet our students' communicative needs. From these points of view all coursewriters (whether they are using a structural or a semantic syllabus) must be aggressive. The days of breakfast time conversations about table and

chairs, and long commentaries about the position of objects in the classroom, must be banished forever. And they can be banished without radical changes in syllabus design.

Our way of thinking about student language needs is now 'multi-dimensional' because, whereas before syllabus designers used to draw up lists of structures and words to teach, they now draw up lists of structures, words, functions, notions, settings, topics, roles. Van Ek's Threshold Level syllabus list (1975)* is an example of this new approach. Our idea of what we want to teach is today richer, more complex than in the past, and this poses a challenge for all syllabus designers, structural and semantic alike. Sometimes people seem to assume that syllabus lists like van Ek's can only be covered by semantic syllabuses. But this is not the case. These lists talk (among other things) about functions, notions ... and structures. And we can take any one of these as our 'unit of organisation'. A structurally organised coursebook can cover a syllabus list like van Ek's with as much ease or (more to the point!) with as much difficulty as a semantically-organised coursebook.

The structural coursewriter can, then, take advantage of our new way of looking at students' needs. He can also benefit from recent advances in teaching techniques. We are nowadays more aware of the need to put our students in situations where they have to communicate with each other. Some of the new coursebooks appearing on the market are quite exciting from the point of view of technique. They involve the students in situations where there is an 'information gap'. For example, some students in the class may have to get information from other students, and then use this information for some small problem-solving task. This involves real communication and, with a little ingenuity, it is possible to arrange that the language practised in exercises like these is restricted to one or two grammar points. We can include these exercises in a lesson on 'the Present Perfect' as easily as in a lesson on 'greeting', 'inviting' or 'making arrangements'.

Two points in conclusion. The first is to emphasise that we have here been talking about teaching a very specific sort of beast - the zero adult

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* Van Ek, Jan, The Threshold Level, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1975.

beginner. I would be the first to admit that for different sorts of students, and for different language teaching situations, functional courses are useful. But the danger is that we will overgeneralise, and argue that just because functional syllabuses are useful in some situations, they must be useful in all. A general cure-all. The second point is to make explicit something that has been suggested earlier in this article. It is that whether or not we succeed in giving our students a communicative competence which they will find useful in their own lives, depends on how carefully we look at their language needs, and on the techniques we use to teach them. Syllabus design is important; but it concerns how we organise what we decide to teach our students. Unless we have correctly identified what we are to teach, and thought about how we are to teach it, we cannot succeed, whatever syllabus design we use. We should not become obsessed with functional syllabuses - and perhaps people should write fewer articles about syllabus design, and more about methodology!

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DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

*Patricia A. Denham

Traditionally classes in English as a Second Language in Australia have focused considerable attention on listening and speaking skills. The classic ESL materials (such as Situational English) placed far more emphasis on the audiolingual aspects of language, than on the skills of reading and writing. However, as child migrant programmes have developed and as more adult learners wish to pursue tertiary level studies, teachers have felt an increasing need to assist students to master writing skills which will help them cope with their educational tasks.

It is debatable that creative writing is of much use in this respect. Creative writing aims at the free expression of thoughts and emotions. Since these personal feelings are more naturally expressed in one's first language, it can be argued that creative writing is more suitably the province of first language classes, or at least of fluent bilingual students - not the students one normally encounters in ESL classes. Additionally, written work in educational environments has a fairly restricted and specialised purpose: to report, to summarise, to explain, to argue and so on. We have no evidence that writing skills of one kind lead to an improvement in writing skills of another; we do not know whether creative writing helps students develop vocational writing skills.

Another, and possibly more serious, difficulty with creative writing is, what to do about errors? Even the most inexperienced teacher of English as a Second Language soon realises that written exercises have to be carefully structured if they are to be within the capabilities of the student. Without this structuring, the resultant writing, and its plethora of mistakes, poses problems. It is demoralising for the student to be faced with exercises heavily studded with corrections. Yet the alternative - to ignore many of the errors (either as an act of kindness, or as an incentive to write more) - may have its dangers. Writing, because it is slower, more deliberate and permanent than speech, may produce a longer lasting impression on the learner; it is possible that errors reinforced through writing may be more difficult to eliminate than

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spoken ones. Again, we do not know. The little research done in this area is inconclusive.

Given that the ESL class is probably not the place for creative writing, both teacher and pupil may nevertheless feel trapped in a web of controlled writing exercises which, though reducing error, bring the student no nearer to his ultimate goal: free written expression.

This paper outlines a five-step progression from fully structured writing to free writing which minimises error while at the same time allowing the student increasing degrees of freedom. The five stages are discussed separately under the following headings:

I. Fully controlled
II. Structurally determined
III. Model-based
IV. Cue-based
V. Topic-based

I. FULLY CONTROLLED

Fully controlled exercises are those in which written material is copied from source A (usually a text book, blackboard or ditto sheet) to source B (usually the pupil's exercise book). While the need for this kind of work may be considered self-evident by primary school teachers, its importance for secondary and tertiary age students should not be underestimated. For all groups, copying provides valuable practice in the mechanical skills associated with writing. These skills include not only correct symbol formation, but also punctuation and spelling.

As increasing numbers of migrants come to Australia from areas not using the Roman alphabet (as for instance, Turkey and various Asian countries), or from language groups which use only part of the Roman alphabet (as for example, certain Filipino vernaculars), the need to practise letter formation increases. Even among groups of students thoroughly familiar with all the symbols of the Roman alphabet, rules of punctuation and

capitalisation differ. French-speaking students will have been taught not to capitalise the initial letter of the days of the week and months of the year; Spanish-speaking students will have been taught not to capitalise nationalities; German speakers will tend to use capitals with all nouns, not simply those we call proper nouns. Exercises in copying draw attention to punctuation and capitalisation. They also aid spelling, especially if the teacher insists on high standards (90%+) for exercises of this type.

One way of placing additional emphasis on spelling is for the teacher to partially blank out high frequency words in a passage when they occur for the second and subsequent times. In this way, the student's attention can be drawn to particular features of English spelling, such as the doubling of the final consonant before certain suffixes. Even though certain words in a passage may be partially deleted, this kind of exercise is, nevertheless, called a fully controlled one, since, theoretically at least, the opportunity for making mistakes is minimal.

In addition to copying exercises and filling in blanks, there are two other types of controlled exercise which should be mentioned: sentence-creation exercises using substitution tables, and seen dictations. At their most difficult, exercises using substitution tables may involve recognition skills: the student may be required to recognise which subjects are permitted with which verbs and objects; at their simplest, the subject, verb and object columns in the table may be divided to prevent errors. In contrast, seen dictations involve not only (sound/symbol) recognition but also recall skills. Consequently, they are harder than substitution table exercises.

II. STRUCTURALLY DETERMINED EXERCISES

Slightly more difficult than fully controlled exercises, structurally determined ones allow the pupil some degree of freedom, either to supply missing elements (as in a partially blanked out substitution table) or to transform a series of sentences of one type into another, as in example 1, in which the pupil, by changing a series of yes/no questions to statements, produces a paragraph of connected sentences which begin: Cats are good pets. They are fun to play with...

Example 1

Yes/no questions to statements.

Are cats good pets? Are they fun to play with? Are there cats with long hair and cats with short hair? Are there cats with tails and cats without tails? Are there grey cats and white cats and yellow cats and black cats? Are there striped cats and spotted cats too?

(Based on the Golden Book Series)

While the context of this example is obviously for young children, the technique, using contextually appropriate materials, is suitable for students of all ages.

A variation of this technique uses a paragraph of information followed by yes/no and or questions which when answered produce a paragraph of prose, as in example 2:

Example 2

Last week I went out to lunch with my friend George. George is very fat. He likes good food - and a lot of it. We sat at a table in a

restaurant. The waiter brought a tray full of things. After a big meal we ate some cheese and drank some coffee. 'We really must go now, George,' I said. 'We have been here for nearly three hours. It's ten to four.'

'What do you mean?' asked George in surprise. 'We can't leave now. It's time for tea!'

QUESTIONS

Your answer must not be more than 47 words.

1 Did George and I go to a restaurant for lunch or for dinner?

2 Is George fat or is he thin?

3 Does he like a lot of good food or not?

4 Did we eat a big meal, or did we eat a small one?

5 How long did we stay in the restaurant?

6 What time was it?

7 Did George want to leave, or did he want to stay?

8 Was it time for tea, or was it time for dinner?

(L. G. Alexander)

A similar structurally determined exercise is one in which the information paragraph is followed by wh- questions, as in example 3.

Example 3

Our summer holidays last three months. During the last week of the holidays we get ready for school. We buy pencils, pens, paper, new books and copy books. On the first day of school we see all our old friends again and we tell them about the holidays. After that we go into class. It is so hard to keep quiet and pay attention to our teacher. He always says with a laugh, 'You forget more in three months than you learn in a year!'

QUESTIONS

Your answer must not be more than 55 words.

1 How long do our summer holidays last?

2 When do we prepare for school?

3 Whom do we see on the first day?

4 What do we tell them?

5 Where do we go then?

6 What does our teacher always say?

(L. G. Alexander)

Example 4 provides a slightly more difficult variation. In this example a series of wh- and yes/no questions is changed into three paragraphs of statements, with the student supplying information as necessary.

Example 4

THE FIRST HOUR OF THE FLIGHT

Directions: As you change the three following paragraphs of questions into statements, note how frequently you are using the past tense compared with the past perfect. (The past tense is the normal tense for narrative writing: the only use of the past perfect is to name the earlier of two actions.) Underline the past perfect whenever you use it.

How recently did you take a long airplane ride? From what country to what country were you flying? How long had you been planning this trip? How early did you get to the airport? How long had you been standing in line before you boarded the plane?

Had you already fastened your seat belt when the hostess made her inevitable request? Did you watch with interest as a hostess covered her pretty nose with an oxygen mask and showed everyone how easy it was to breathe normally? Had it ever occurred to you that you might need such a mask on a plane trip? Did you read the card telling how to exit by a window - one leg, body, other leg? However, had you read somewhere the chances of a plane accident are now 0.15 for each million passengers?

Was it a pleasure to have coffee soon after the plane was airborne?

Was it an even greater pleasure to see the hostesses approaching with a tray full of food in each hand? Had you known about pulling down a small shelf from the back of the seat in front of you? Did you dine comfortably off this shelf? At the end of an hour had you come to feel that the plane was a safe and comfortable place to be?

(Lois Robinson)

Examples 1-4 indicate a variety of exercises which may be labelled "structurally determined". The writing which they initiate is based on a series of sentence-frames supplied to the pupil in the form of closed-option questions.

Consequently, they restrict the number of errors, but since they involve more than simple copying (as for instance, transformations of auxiliary plus verb to the appropriate verb without auxiliary) they are less restrictive than fully controlled exercises.

III. MODEL-BASED WRITING

As the title of this section implies, model-based exercises are those in which the pupil is supplied with a sample of writing and then asked to produce a similar item. The model, which may be either prose or dialogue, may be followed by numerous guidelines to the pupil, even to the extent of indicating which words must be included in the answer, and showing where new sentences must start. Example 5 illustrates such an exercise.

Example 5

Read situations 1 and 3 below carefully, and then write about a demonstration last week. Use the prompts and begin with this sentence:

'There was a small demonstration in Hyde Park last week.'
demonstrators/students/policemen;not any soldiers/but/tourists;reporters/ but not many;Saturday/most/football match;also/other young people/Park/ not interested/demonstration.

1
This is a small demonstration in a London park. There are some demonstrators and some policemen in the park, but only a few. There are not any soldiers there but there are a few tourists. There are also some reporters there; in fact, there are quite a few. There are also some birds in the trees but they are not very interested in the demonstration.

3
This strike began last week and it is still going on. There are some policemen and strikers in front of the factory but only a few. It is Saturday and most of the men are watching a big football match. The strange thing is that there are not any reporters or television cameramen there; perhaps they are at the match too.

(O'Neill, Kingsbury and Yeadon)

Alternatively, the pupil may be given no assistance other than what is supplied by the model. The following example is an exercise to write a paragraph using spatial development. Similar models and exercises may be used for practising the main forms of paragraph development, such as chronological, comparative and causative development.

Example 6

Since you have not been in the local post office, I shall describe

it to you. On your right as you enter the post office is the telegram and telegraph counter. Directly in front of you as you enter are the parcel post, registered letter, and stamp counters. To the left of these counters and opposite the telegraph counter are the telephone booths. Three of the booths have inter-city telephones, and one of them has an intercontinental telephone. To the right of the stamp counter, and in the right hand corner of the room, is the postmaster's office. In the middle of the room are two desks where people can write telegrams or letters, and address envelopes. In fact, I am sitting at one of those desks now.

Use the model paragraph and the grammar notes as a guide and write a paragraph describing a library reading room (it might be your school or university library).

(F. Chaplen)

Unlike structurally determined exercises which usually elicit only one correct sentence pattern for each response, model-based exercises allow for numerous, alternative correct answers. For instance, the first prompt in example 5, demonstrators/students/policemen/, may elicit: there were some demonstrators, but only a few students and policemen; or it may elicit: there were some demonstrators and some students, but only a few policemen; or, although there were some demonstrators and students, there were only a few policemen; and so on.

In model-based writing one sees a greater degree of structural freedom as well as a shift in emphasis towards sentence sequencing and logical development.

IV. CUE OR INFORMATION-BASED WRITING

While model-based writing supplies an example, and may also supply cues, cue or information-based writing involves no model. Instead, the student may be supplied with information to be incorporated in the answer, as in example 7.

Example 7

Suppose you are a young journalist. You want a job with the same

company that Linda Blake wants to work for. Its name is:

The English Broadcasting Company,
6 Mortimer Street,
LONDON W.1.

Write a short letter to say who you are and applying for the job. These are the facts.

1 You saw an advertisement for the job in The Times.
2 You are now working for the Harlow Herald (a small town newspaper in Essex).
3 You speak French and German.
4 You are very interested in making educational programmes.
5 You have never made educational programmes before.
6 You would like more details about the job.

Begin the letter: Dear Sirs.
Finish it with: Yours faithfully.

(Robert O'Neill)

Example 8 is another instance of cue or information-based writing. In this example, however, the student is given an outline in the form of brief questions which have to be answered. This type of exercise differs from example 4 (a structurally determined exercise) which also uses a series of questions. In example 8 the questions are much more open ended, allowing the student greater freedom to supply his or her own sentence patterns. Note particularly the right hand column of questions in example 8.

Example 8

Write a short paragraph which tells what happened during a journey. Try to include information which will answer these questions:

(a) Who made the journey? One or more than one person?
You, or someone else?

(b)	Who did he specially notice in the vehicle?	Man, or woman, or child? Old or young? Sitting or standing? Where?
(c)	What did this person look like?	What was he/she wearing? What was he/she carrying?
(d)	What was this person doing?	Doing something with fingers or hands? Using something to do it with?
(e)	What happened?	Was the other person hurt or surprised? Did the other person suffer? Did the other person get angry, or laugh/cry?
(f)	What did the traveller do?	Watch? Do/say something?
(g)	What happened in the end?	

(K. W. Moody)

V TOPIC-BASED WRITING

Topic-based writing is the least structurally and contextually controlled. The writing is elicited by means of either visual or verbal prompts. For instance, a series of pictures may be presented to the students who are asked to write about what they see in each picture. This kind of material is particularly useful for developing narrative skills.

Alternatively, the writing may be elicited by means of a well specified topic, as in example 9.

Example 9

Write a letter of application for a job. Decide what sort of job it is, and give or invent the name of the paper in which you saw the advertisement. State where you were trained, how long your training took, and what certificates or qualifications you possess. Also state what experience you have had in the job, and mention two particular types of work you have done. Say that you could produce

recommendations if necessary, and give the dates and times when you would be able to attend for an interview.

(K. W. Moody)

In exercise 9 the student is told what the letter should contain but is not given any cues about how to start or end it, nor told any facts to be included, though the instructions specify that information about education and experience must be incorporated. This allows the student more freedom than example 7 which deals with the same subject: a letter of application for a job.

Less well specified, but still topic-based, is the technique of using topic sentences; the teacher supplies the first sentence of the paragraph and the students continue from that point. By this means the writing is controlled to some extent since the verb forms are restricted, as in the following example which is designed to produce a paragraph of contrast, using past and present tense verbs:

> Write a paragraph contrasting your hobbies of five years ago with those you have now. Begin: Five years ago my favourite hobby was....., but now I am more interested in.....

A fourth technique is the dicto-comp. The teacher reads aloud a short item of not more than 200 words length, such as an anecdote. The students listen to the item twice and then write it down in their own words, possibly using a topic sentence supplied by the teacher. As with the other examples of topic-based exercises, the student has considerable freedom to use whichever sentence structures he wishes.

These examples of topic-based writing indicate some of the varied techniques which may be used at this stage of the writing programme - the stage at which the student embarks on free writing.

As a means of communication, writing is an artificial device. Even those learning to communicate in their mother tongue have more difficulty mastering writing than speaking skills. Consequently, they benefit from

a breakdown of the writing skills, if they are to ultimately produce fluent, error-free prose. For the second-language student, free writing without preceding stages of control produces many errors and is akin to a sink-or-swim approach.

Tossing non-swimmers into the deep end of a pool may produce some swimmers (it hardly teaches any of them), but it may put others off swimming for life - not to mention those who may drown in the process. Free writing in a foreign language is similar to coping with the deep end of the pool. In the same way that beginning swimmers need the shallow end to develop confidence and play at swimming (albeit with one hand on the bottom), so also do those learning to write need to develop confidence and familiarity with the medium before embarking on free expression and creative writing.

SUMMARY

This five-fold analysis of writing exercises covers the three main skills of all writing: the mechanical skills, the structural skills, and the productive skills. It is based on the assumption that by and large students learn what they practise, and if their ESL classes are geared to their needs as full members of a school or college environment, they will benefit from them far more than if they are given unstructured free-expression writing sessions, in the hope that miracles will occur.

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JOURNEY TO HUNGARY

*A.J. Grassby

In an accompanying letter, Mr Grassby had the following to say:

'There is great debate in Australia at present about multicultural and multilingual education. We are only at the beginning of our consideration of what it is best to do for all our children.

'I recently visited Hungary to see what has been done in that country to recognise the cultural and linguistic needs of Hungarians of various backgrounds.

'They have in fact initiated programmes which recognise cultural diversity and at primary school level there is provision for children to acquire a knowledge of three languages before they complete primary schooling at the age of 14.

'The attached report of my visit deals in some detail with the structure of Hungarian schools, their philosophy on multiculturalism and the way in which they tackle their language programmes. I felt it might be of interest to your readers, particularly in the context of the present debate in Australia. I would assume that they are between 10-15 years ahead in this specific sphere'.

The idea of making a journey to Hungary had been in my mind since, as a schoolboy of 12, I read the story of the heroic rebellion led by Kossuth more than a century ago. He emerged as one of my boyhood heroes, and for many years I read as much as I could about Hungary and its people. It was to be a very long time, however, before I met my first Hungarians. They came in large numbers after the 1956 fighting, and I was associated with a group of people in the Riverina in New South Wales who made arrangements to welcome the refugees as they arrived.

As the years rolled by I developed a wide circle of Hungarian friends, including such people as Mrs Vera Jedlin and Dr Andrew Dezsery. Hungarian Australians such as Judy Cassab and Sir Peter Abeles have played increasingly important roles in so many spheres.

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* The Hon. A.J. Grassby is Australia's Commissioner for Community Relations. His report relates to a visit he made to Hungary in April, 1978.

I have also had the privilege of being a guest at the Hungarian Club at Punchbowl in Sydney and the Hungarian Club in Canberra, where I've spent many a happy occasion in good company.

Nevertheless, until April 1978 I had never been to Hungary. The idea of the visit was born at the time of the visit to Australia by Mr Istran Molnar, a representative of the World Federation of Hungarians, a social and cultural body founded in the late 1920's which takes a special interest in Hungarian language and culture. During his visit to Australia he was particularly interested in the new programmes being developed to teach community languages in both public and Catholic schools and also to see something of the development of Hungarian in ethnic schools. We met at my headquarters in Canberra and he noticed a presentation that had been made to me by the Hungarian Club at Punchbowl. I confessed that that was as close as I had ever been to Hungary. He told me that there were some new initiatives also in Hungary in teaching community languages at primary school level, and he suggested that I might be interested in seeing at first hand something of the new language teaching techniques in the schools.

Meanwhile, I had enlisted the assistance of the Hungarian Ambassador, His Excellency Dr Zsigmond Kazmer on behalf of Sister Joan Opi of the Dominican Order. Sister Opi is in charge of music teaching in Dominican convents and was anxious to visit Hungary to study the unique Hungarian system of teaching music named after the world famous composer, the late Zoltan Kodaly.

Sister Opi was worried as to whether she would be able to accomplish her mission successfully, and with the help of Dr Kazmer her itinerary was arranged, the studies completed, and she has returned successfully to teach the new Hungarian-developed system now being widely adopted throughout the world of music.

Dr Kazmer was also surprised that I had never visited Hungary. He felt that a visit to look at community language teaching would be well worthwhile.

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It was a sunny spring day in Rome when I departed for Budapest. I had been warned that Budapest in March would be cold and windy and that I should rug up. I was equipped with a sheepskin coat, a goatskin hat, gloves and warm underwear. Flying by the Hungarian airline Malev, I arrived in the evening to find that it was not as cold as Canberra. It was Easter time and on the flight every passenger received an Easter egg in traditional Hungarian style.

Mr Molnar was waiting at the airport with one superb long-stemmed rose for my wife, who accompanied me. We went through the city to the hotel and when I woke in the morning and looked out the window I discovered that I was in the centre of a castle. When I recovered from my confusion I discovered that the hotel, the Buda Hilton, which is situated on Castle Hill in the historic centre of Buda, had been built and joined in with a 700 year-old Dominican Monastery and Church which had been destroyed in World War II.

The sweep of the Danube was tremendously impressive. Looking across the river, we saw what was surely the largest and most impressive Parliament House in Europe. I was told it had been built to house the Imperial Parliament in the days of the Empire.

We walked a great deal around the old town of Buda watching the painstaking reconstruction of war damaged ancient buildings, shopping, looking and enjoying the spring scene. Across the river in Pest, the broad main shopping centres presented a busy picture of a bustling capital. One feature of an afternoon stroll was to queue to see the recently returned Crown of St. Stephen and the Coronation Symbols. I think it was the biggest attraction in all Budapest. In many ways Budapest is still St. Stephen's city; his statue, his name and his presence seem to be everywhere.

One evening at the Opera we sat in a packed house to watch a modern ballet company from the town of Pecs. This happens to be Mr Molnar's hometown. After the ballet we visited the Hungaria, a most elegant restaurant in the grand style. I was vastly amused to find at the top of the menu "Kangaroo tail soup". I settled for a Hungarian dish.

I visited the headquarters of the World Federation of Hungarians, located in a quiet elegant avenue not far from the city centre. The Federation has associated with it an organisation called the Mother Tongue Movement, which has as its objective the preservation of Hungarian language and culture among the 1,300,000 Hungarians living abroad, 60% of whom live in the U.S.A. The Movement is led by specialists and academics in the Hungarian language at home and abroad.

Every second year a Mother Tongue Conference is held to assess the experiences in the various countries, to set new goals for the improvement of the syllabus and the development of teaching techniques adapted to Hungarian in various countries. The objective is to develop methods and books suited to the needs of Hungarian-Americans, Hungarian-Australians and Hungarian-Canadians. While the Mother Tongue Movement is a group of language specialists, the Federation helps in the supply of the books which it develops. They have developed three separate works covering the ages of six to sixteen, written folklore histories and devised summer courses for Hungarian teachers who are guests in Hungary for three weeks. During summer camps every year Hungarians from abroad study language and traditional culture and join with Hungarian-born people of the same age and specialist language teachers who teach in the Hungarian language. Students between 14 and 18 have a summer college where they study Hungarian and folk culture.

In Austria, Sweden and Yugoslavia, Hungarian children are taught in State schools in Hungarian. In the United States in primary schools this year the teaching of the Hungarian language has begun. In one school two teachers have been supplied by and from Hungary and they are paid for by the United States school system.

At the time of my visit to the Federation, I had discussions with Dr Zoltan Szabo, Mr Miklos Szanto, Dr Tamas Voros and of course Mr Molnar. At the conclusion of the talks at the Federation we adjourned for lunch to a Teachers' College about a block away where groups of teachers and students of Hungarian from all over the world were gathered. There were flags of the U.S.A., Italy, Germany and at our table the Australian flag.

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My main objective in visiting Hungary was to explore the new approach adopted in language teaching in Hungarian schools and the new recognition of ethnic language minorities within the school system. This exploration began in the countryside at a town called Pilisszentkercszt ("Holy Crest of Pilis") with a population of 2,300 people, mostly of Slovak origin. On our arrival we were met at the Town Hall by the Chairman of the local Council, Local Council members, and the Regional Head of the Department of Education. We asked questions about local responsibility, particularly in relation to education.

We had left Budapest before the sun was up but the last chill of the morning was banished completely after Torröly, coffee and water (in that order) multiplied three times.

We went on to the school where, having been further warmed by more Torröly, coffee and water, again in that order, we had talks with the Director and members of her staff plus the Council Chairman and the Regional Director of Education. Our hope was to get the picture of the approach to education generally, but particularly in relation to language teaching.

The school we visited in Pilisszentkercszt has 200 students with an average class size of between 22 and 30. The children sang songs in Hungarian and Slovak and I had a question-and-answer session with some of the older students about their knowledge of Australia. The fame of Australia as usual was wrapped up in the kangaroo but they also knew the name of the national capital and where Australia is located. I wondered how many Australian primary school children know where Hungary is actually located and the name of the capital city.

From this primary school the children go on to secondary school in Hungarian or they can go on to a secondary school in Slovak and Hungarian. There are three types of language teaching in Hungary. For example, in schools where the majority of children are Slovak, the subjects are taught in Slovak at primary level. The children study Hungarian from day one in school, and they would receive Hungarian language teaching for three or four hours a week for five years. After five years the pace of Hungarian instruction slows to three hours a week.

The second kind of school is what is known as a mixed school, that is, a school where there are Hungarian, Slovak and German children. Here, the mainstream teaching of all subjects is in Hungarian, whereas the minority receive initial instruction in their first language while being introduced to Hungarian.

The third kind of language teaching in schools is where there may be only one or two students whose first language is not Hungarian. In such cases the students are taught in their first language initially while being introduced to the Hungarian language.

A number of decisions have been made about the kind of language teaching for children whose first language is not Hungarian. A particularly good exarple of the problems faced in trying to decide what kind of language training should be given is the case of the Swabian Germans who arrived in Hungary between 400 and 500 years ago. Over all the centuries they have spoken a dialect which is not understood by German people today and does not enable them to participate in the mainstream of German literature and culture. A decision has been taken that the teaching of these students should be in modern German and not in the 500-year-old dialect.

The problem also exists in relation to the Slovakians, whose ancestors came to Hungary in the 18th century when the Turks retreated, leaving many towns and villages without people. The Hungarians had either been killed in wars with the Ottoman Empire or had been removed, and so a decision was taken to fill the empty towns and villages with Slovaks and Germans seeking land. The people spoke 18th century Slovak and lived in considerable isolation. Over the years the Slovak tongue embraced many Hungarian words and in nearly every sentence today the people use both Slovak and Hungarian words. So the legacy of the centuries was an 18th century dialect considerably confused with Hungarian but adequate for communities that were basically comprised of timber workers living in rural isolation. Today the majority work in city factories, and as women have also gone into industry, the two imperatives for the population were to have access to modern Slovak, and to Hungarian as the language of general communication.

The first attack on language takes place in kindergarten where, for three years, the children are introduced to Slovak as a preparation for starting their studies. Beginning school at age six, the children go through to 8th class, which they complete usually at 14. Between 15% and 20% go on to secondary school, which starts at age 14.

There are two types of secondary school: (1) the gymnasium, which leads to university. Between 22% and 23% of the secondary school population attend these schools. (2) the other stream would go into secondary schools with a more technical content.

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Another typical town of mixed ethnic background is Pomar (population 13,000) situated 17 km from Budapest. Most of the population is Serbian but it also includes Slovaks and Germans. These Serbians also arrived in the 18th century after the Turks withdrew and all the original inhabitants were either killed or removed as slaves. An explanation of this apparently free movement of people is the fact that Hungary, Serbia and Slovakia were all part of the Austrian Empire under one administration.

Originally there were many more German settlers who were brought in to fill the vacuum left by the dead Hungarians and, although the effort was made in those far off days to settle them on the best land and in the best villages, they found the conditions still not good enough and the majority left, making way for further waves of settlers in the Slovaks and the Serbs.

Around Budapest there is a belt of towns and villages made up of these mixed populations which are a legacy of this kind of settlement. The schools and the medical services are all under the control of local councils, the administration is carried out by a special council committee on education and in conjunction with the local variety of the P & C Association they deal with school programmes. The majority of teachers in the school are local appointees but they also can ask for specialist teachers from the State Department of Education. The major authority rests with the Director of the school and the council.

The School Director can appoint and also sack but the teacher has the right of appeal to the Regional Director. In the school at Holy Crest there were 16 teachers all told, six of them were bilingual and 10 spoke only Hungarian.

One of the most important points to emerge from a study of the Hungarian system is the fact that language and culture are regarded as the basic right of all children. In many cases in Australia where there is opposition to this, a frequent device is to put the responsibility for language and cultural teaching onto the parents or the child.

The kind of approach I mean is where a child of Hungarian background, for example, is asked, 'What do you speak at home?', 'Do your parents speak English?', 'Do you want to learn Hungarian?'

These questions can be posed in such a way that the child who is anxious to be exactly like everyone else replies negatively.

Despite the increasing use of more Hungarian at home among the language minorities, the schools believe it is important for the child to know his roots. Twenty-five years ago the schools taught exclusively Hungarian, but under the new system of language teaching all of them have switched to the bilingual approach. Now a further change has been brought about to introduce trilingual education.

In some cases school authorities may say, 'That's good enough'. Armed with this excuse and device, they drop language and cultural teaching. This has been recognised in Hungary as not good enough. Many of the children in Slovakian, Serbian and German areas begin school in their first language knowing comparatively little about it. Their parents may even speak Hungarian at home or such a confused mixture that it is scarcely a language at all. These children would have four or five lessons a week in their first language and by 8th class speak their mother tongue better than they did when they entered school.

It has been accepted now as firm policy that even where the minorities have lost their mother tongue they should have the opportunity to rediscover their past, their language and their culture in order to

enrich themselves and the Hungarian heritage generally.

If there are three or four different groups they all receive four lessons a week in their mother tongue in one of these mixed schools.

Considering that, in the Australian context, it has been suggested that the English-speaking parents would resent bilingual education for their children, it is interesting to note that in Hungary the Hungarian children have the right to opt out of bilingual programmes but that none ever has. In other words, Hungarian parents have embraced the concept of equipping their children bilingually. It is interesting that a Morgan poll carried out in June, 1978 disclosed that nine out of ten English-speaking Australians favoured bilingual education for their children, even though only 29% of those parents had a second language themselves.

There are a number of techniques in use in the various mixed schools. In some schools where the majority are Hungarian, lessons in the mother tongue are given before and after mainstream lessons and so there are some separate classes in Serbian and German. The parents decide whether their children get additional language lessons or not. The point is that language is taught to all.

The law states that the School Director must inform parents of language choice and opportunity.

The present objective is that all Hungarian children will be expert in three languages within the next 25 years. The third language is Russian.

Russian studies were introduced into the system as a third language in September 1977. It is proposed that in the first four years the concentration should be on the mother tongue (Serbian or Slovakian, for example) and on Hungarian, but children who start in fifth class at the age of ten learn Russian. This involves three lessons of one hour a week. This will embrace the entire school population. The position now is that the trilingual objective provides for Hungarian plus two, one of which must be Russian.

I was somewhat amused at the defensiveness of discussing the Russian

programme. It was evident that, as it is the language of a big neighbour and a big power no one wanted to give the impression that it was something that had been forced on the school system. My reaction was to say that it was eminently sensible to learn the language of a large neighbour because, whether you like your neighbours or not, you are bound to them by the immutable law of geography and, just as there is room in Australia for a vastly expanded programme in Indonesian, so obviously Russian is a useful tool for Hungarians in understanding their neighbours just as we must understand ours.

The experience so far is that once a child has a second language his third is still easier. The actual technique of language study I was particularly impressed with. The basic book is known as Képes Nyelvkönyv and is used to teach Hungarian, Slovakian, Serbian, Russian, German and Romance languages such as Italian and Romanian.

The first two years of language study are devoted only to learning how to speak. This involves four lessons per week with eight hours of study in an eleven day period. The basic language book is without words. It is entirely illustrated. It would be used for children reading and writing only Hungarian from day one; the book would introduce them to their second language for the first two years. By the end of the two years, experience is that students can fluently speak two languages. At the end of three years they are exposed to some knowledge of grammar and they begin to read and finally to write.

There are further policy changes being considered which would start the third language in the third year and not fifth year, beginning verbally and after three years introducing reading and writing.

The major changes in 25 years in Hungary have been to abandon monolingualism and then to discard the next policy, which was to teach the dialect in each community and not the literary language. There is a great emphasis on the idea that the literary language opens doors to newspapers, books and literature generally. For example, it was found to be hardly sensible to teach, in Hungary, a dialect that had not been heard in Germany for hundreds of years.

Hungarian school hours follow the pattern of most of Europe. The children attend at 8.00 a.m. and finish at 1.30 p.m. They have a ten-minute break between each period which lasts for 45 minutes. They have a fifteen-minute lunch break. School uniforms can be made compulsory by a combined decision of each school's teachers and parents. It is optional.

Some of the subjects that I noticed particularly included health courses such as studies of the dangers of smoking. It was indicated that there was no drug problem at any level anywhere in the school system. In some schools where parents are working children can have meals provided. In some schools 60% of the children take advantage of school meals, paid for according to family income. Latch-key children stay back under special arrangements until 4.00 p.m., special teachers coming in to teach up to that time. The children do their homework and can undertake additional activities according to their interests. The average school day is five hours with an average of one to 1½ hours of homework. Sport is compulsory for three hours a week in all schools.

There is also a system of secondary Catholic education. As in Australia, parents pay fees. The syllabus is the same as for public schools but with the addition of religious instruction and religious training.

The kaleidoscope of impressions and information collected can be brought together in summary in four major points.

(1) The new Hungarian school system is based on every child being bilingual and most being trilingual.

(2) A language and cultural program is basic, and an integral part of every school, and provision is made for all children irrespective of their ethnic background and first language.

(3) It has been recognised that it is in the interests of the child, for his full development, that he should be aware of his roots, his culture and his heritage.

(4) The experimentation in techniques of teaching has led to the

adoption of a system of verbal teaching for two years and exposure then to grammar, reading and finally writing. The use of the same basic pictorial book in six languages is regarded as economic and efficient.

These decisions on multiculturalism are all the more remarkable when it is known that only 156,000 Hungarians, about 1.5% of the population, have declared their mother tongue to be other than Hungarian. These comprise Slavs, Germans, Romanians and Slovaks. They have between them nearly 500 language and culture clubs and the Hungarian version of ethnic radio is broadcast in Serbo-Croatian, German and Slovak.

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Before leaving the Hungarian countryside we travelled to a mountain hotel high above the plains for a luncheon that warmed the spirit as well as the stomach. The snow of winter was still melting away in odd corners but - perhaps because of the food, the wine and the company combined - the cold was banished on the long drive back to Budapest.

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One of the most interesting explorations I made was to Magyar Radio where Mr Vilmos Gati outlined the English language broadcasts on Hungarian radio. I was very much impressed with the history scripts. The teaching of history was done as a series of radio broadcasts from Buda as they might have been done centuries ago if there had been radio at that time. One of these broadcasts masterfully brought the reports from the Turkish Empire under Sultan Mohammed II who was then dealing with a domestic squabble of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. There was also a special report on the English civil war known as the War of the Roses and finally a Vatican reporter describing Pope Pius II's activities in rallying support against the Turks. This is one of the most imaginative scripts that I have seen. Certainly it is a technique which we could use in Australia, where history is either not taught at all or taught in such a way that the children switch off and learn nothing.

I also gave a broadcast myself and outlined some of the developments in Australia leading to a better recognition of our own multicultural society which is many times more diverse of course than Hungary's. A charming English-speaking Hungarian, Veronika Sarkany, did the interview but I must confess she did not get too many words in as I told the story of Australia's advance towards a multicultural society.

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COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR BEGINNING LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Elizabeth Joiner. Reprinted from *English Teaching Forum*, XV,2, April 1977

At a meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) held in Washington in November 1975, Professor Joiner, of the University of South Carolina, presented a paper on communicative competence for beginning language students, based on her experience in teaching French to native speakers of English. Feeling that her remarks would be equally appropriate to the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, FORUM asked Dr Joiner if she would share her ideas with their readers by means of an article on this subject. By "translating" into English the few specific references that she makes to French, the reader can readily perceive how the techniques she describes can be applied to the teaching of any language.

In recent years language teachers have become increasingly aware of the fact that there is a great difference between speaking and communicating, between the oral production of linguistically correct responses and the transmission and reception of real information. The ability to transmit and receive messages is often referred to as "communicative competence", or "communicative proficiency", and this term is appearing more and more frequently in statements of goals for language programmes. Furthermore, the viewpoint is often expressed that communicative activities should be included even in the earliest stages of language learning.(1)

The language teacher sees all this as a rather drastic departure from the goals and procedures associated with the audiolingual method, and will want to ask at least two questions: "How can I get beginning students, with their limited knowledge of structure and vocabulary, to communicate?" and "If I include communicative activities in my beginning classes, what results can I expect?". Several research studies undertaken during the past decade have been designed to shed light on such questions, and there is now a fairly sizable body of evidence which seems to indicate that beginning students learn to communicate best when their oral language practice involves realistic, meaningful use of the language.

My own investigation of oral language practice, which took place in the fall of 1973, resulted in conclusions similar to those previously reached by Oller and Obrecht, Jarvis, and Savignon.(2) I undertook this classroom experiment to determine the relative effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative oral practice in beginning college French. In three

classes the oral practice consisted exclusively of communicative activities, while in three other classes the oral practice was non-communicative.

According to Paulston, Oller, and others, the essence of communication is the sending and receiving of real messages.(3) The principal practice technique used in the three classes we designated as the communicative group was question-and-answer practice in which the teacher did not know what the student's response would be and in which the student was allowed to control both what he said and how he said it. If asked "What color are your sister's eyes?" he was free to answer, "Her eyes are blue (brown, etc.)" or "My sister has blue (brown, etc.) eyes" or even "I don't have a sister." The activities engaged in by the control group included various types of pattern drills, questions with cued responses, comprehension-type questions on assigned reading material, and teaching of the "Where is the book? It is on the table" variety. This practice was considered non-communicative, as no real information was exchanged.

FOUR COMMUNICATIVE TECHNIQUES

While the question/free-response practice of the experimental group adequately met the criterion of communicative language practice, we felt that the exclusive use of one technique would result in a boring class. For this reason, four other techniques were developed for use in the communicative classes. These were guessing games, situational practice, self-directed dialogues, and social mixers. All of these embodied a real-life, or at least lifelike, use of language.

GUESSING GAMES

Guessing games proved to be quite successful in getting students to use numbers, expressions of time, colors and other adjectives, verbs, and nouns in a realistic manner. In contrast to the usual drill on telling time, in which the teacher sets the hands of the clock and asks students "What time is it?", teachers in the communicative classes used guessing games to induce their students to repeat the expressions of time under more realistic circumstances. A typical guessing game proceeded in this way: The teacher instructed one student to think of the hour at which he went to bed the night before. It was then the task of the class to guess

this time. This they did, calling out in French (the target language) the times "one a.m.," "eleven-thirty," "midnight" etc. When a student guessed the correct time, it was written on the blackboard for visual reinforcement. To continue the game, another student was asked to think of the time he woke up that morning or the time he ate breakfast or the time he finished studying the previous night. When participating in such a guessing game, the student is technically free to say whatever he wishes; however, he must base his guesses on what he knows about the real world—hours at which one usually goes to bed and the like. As the experiment progressed, students used French (the target language) to guess people's ages, other students' favorite singers and actors, what the teacher would be having for dinner, verbs which were acted out by other students, and mystery objects in containers of all shapes and sizes.

SITUATIONAL PRACTICE

In order to participate in real communication one must, of course, be able to ask as well as to answer questions. What might be called situational practice proved to be a successful procedure for eliciting questions from students. In this type of practice, the teacher creates a situation and then asks the student what he would do should he find himself in those circumstances. Here is an example: Imagine that you are walking down the street in Paris (or New York) and you see a little boy crying. What would you say to him? What kinds of questions would you ask? (At this point the students produce such questions as "Are you cold? Are you hungry? Are you lost? Where do you live?".) Suppose, then, that he tells you he is hungry, and you want to offer him some money to buy a roll. How would you express that? Situations of this sort can be continued as long as the students seem interested and have the linguistic ability to participate freely.

THE SELF-DIRECTED DIALOGUE

Guessing games and situational practice involve the whole class at once and therefore do not deviate markedly from the typical classroom pattern of teacher-directed language practice. The self directed dialogue, however, calls for students to work in pairs and so places the responsibility for communication chiefly on the learner. The teacher's role is to prepare the students linguistically for what they are to say and to provide the props which serve as stimuli for conversation.

A conversation built around one of these props might proceed in this manner: After having completed a dialogue concerning the French "carte d'identité", (identification card) the teacher uses the overhead projector to show the class what such a form looks like and then asks them what questions the prefect of police would have to ask in order to complete the form. "Nom" (name), for example, would call for the question "What is your name?" and "lieu de naissance" (place of birth) for "Where were you born?". Following the discussion, the students are divided into pairs and each student is given an identification card to fill in with information about his partner. In order to do this, each in turn must ask questions and supply answers. As a final activity, random students are asked to tell in narrative form the information obtained in the interview. Again the form serves as a prop by providing an outline for a description which might begin as follows: "Mary Jones is American. She was born in New York. She is twenty years old..."

In addition to the identification card, train schedules and menus were used as props for self-directed dialogues in the experiment. Teachers who had never worked with small groups before found that this technique provided enough structure to make them comfortable; it began with the whole group together, as they discussed the prop, and it ended in a whole-group activity in which the students reported to the teacher about what they had done. From start to finish the activity took fifteen to twenty minutes.

A MIXER

The following is an extremely successful communicative activity. It is a kind of "mixer" somewhat like those used at parties to promote conversation, and it is similar to the self-directed dialogue in that it involves the use of a prop. Each student is given a slip of paper containing a list of facts that he must find out and write down; no two lists are identical. A sample list might read as follows:

1. The name of Jane's brother
2. The color of Michael's mother's hair
3. If Pam has any brothers or sisters
4. The age of Christine's father
5. Whether Paul prefers the movies or television

This is a rather noisy activity, as each person talks with a number of others. To bring the class to order again, the teacher asks a few questions based on the lists. The question "Does Pam have any brothers or sisters?" would, for example, be answered by the student who had drawn the list described above. During the experiment the mixer was used a number of times, always with great success.

These four communicative activities - guessing games, situational practice, the self-directed dialogue, and the mixer - were used along with communicative question and answer practice to drill all the structures and vocabulary included in the first semester French course. At the end of the experiment students were tested on their ability to communicate in lifelike situations. In one test each student interviewed a native speaker for four minutes to find out as much information as he could in that amount of time. Another test consisted of describing an actor as he went through a series of motions. The third test was an unrehearsed three-minute talk on a topic. On these tests of communicative competence, or communicative proficiency, the students who had engaged in communicative language practice did significantly better than those whose practice had stressed linguistic accuracy.(4)

TRUTH VALUE AND CORRECTNESS

Communicative activities can and do work in beginning language classes. It should be pointed out, however, that getting students to communicate in much the same way that they would communicate in real settings also implies a certain attitude toward error. Kennedy points out that children get approval from their parents for the truth value of what they say. A child could say "That's John's," which is linguistically correct, and be told "No, it's Harry's." On the other hand, the child could say "Dat Harry," which is linguistically incorrect, and be told "Yes, that's right."(5) Macnamara suggests that "perhaps the teacher should lay aside the red pencil with which he scores any departure from perfection and replace it with a word and a smile of encouragement."(6) This does not mean that no errors should be corrected; it does imply that they should be corrected more subtly and in a less threatening manner than has sometimes been the case in the past. The guiding principle for teachers working with students in the communicative classes was to treat whatever the

student attempted to say with respect.

In June of 1971 Wilga Rivers began a speech with these words: "In almost a quarter of a century we have still not come to grips with our basic problem: How do we develop communicative ability in a foreign language?".(7) I do not suggest that this article represents a completely satisfactory answer to that question. However, to allow and encourage students to engage in communicative activities from the very beginning of their language study does seem a step in the right direction. There remain many aspects of communicative competence to be investigated both by researchers and by classroom teachers who are interested enough in the development of communicative ability to experiment informally in their classrooms. Such a combined effort is necessary if we expect to achieve any understanding of the complex processes involved in communicating ideas in a second language, a phenomenon which, while common "in the street", is still uncommon in far too many classrooms.

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ALL'S WELL THAT STARTS WELL : AN EVALUATION

*E.F. Austin and S. Galvin

Until September 1977 full-time English courses for adults in Darwin followed a programme of linear progression, i.e. progression from "simple" to "complex" structures based on Situational English. Revisions had been made to the original Accelerated English Course, but we were not satisfied with the result.

In December 1976, one teacher attended the Seminar conducted by Ms Eve Ogonowski-Rebone at Melbourne University. There Ms Ogonowski-Rebone, who had contributed to the production of the course in the areas of non-verbal expression and phonetic work, introduced All's Well That Starts Well to a large group of ESL teachers. Ms Ogonowski-Rebone also visited Darwin in May 1977, and most of our teachers gained further knowledge of the course. We were impressed by the "audio-visual structuro-global" method and decided to trial the course.

The first group of All's Well students consisted of sixteen male students including Timorese, Chinese, Lebanese, Turkish and Greek, ranging in ages from 18 to 45. They also represented quite a wide range in terms of educational background and previous exposure to the language. This course was of 13 weeks duration, six hours a day, five days a week. The students were paid allowances under the NEAT Scheme or the Migrant Education allowance - the majority received the former, which explains the extension of the course beyond the usual 10 week limit. Three teachers staffed the course - one full-time, one part-time (4 hours) and one Timorese teacher who is undertaking study and practice to upgrade her teaching qualifications. As the bulk of the students were Timorese, her services were particularly valuable in the early weeks as a bilingual approach is recommended in psychologically preparing the students for the course.

All's Well that Starts Well is a course written specifically for adults. The methodology of the programme rejects the collective, cumulative approach of linear methods in favour of what the Teacher's Handbook calls

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"a global approach to language starting from the perception of speech in situation which can be considered as a total system of communication and expression. Assimilation of globally received speech is done gradually and in successive stages." Stress is on the spoken word and the importance of rhythm, intonation, stress, time, pause, mime, gesture, position and movement is recognised.

All's Well is an integrated course which covers the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, (the primary stress is on listening), comprehension of spoken English and speaking and communicating in English.

The course is divided into four 'Solar Systems' or groups of five units. Each unit provides varied materials and the activities listed below.

1. 20 audiovisual situations - synchronised film strips and recorded texts

2. Listening exercises ("Have a listen in") - recorded texts for listening comprehension

3. Ten silent film strips ("What would you say?") - for which the students provide a dialogue

4. Reading passages ("Read this") - they learn to read as they listen to the passages being read so that correct pronunciation, intonation and stress are learnt

5. Written exercises ("Take your pen") - introduced at Situation 11. These are closely integrated with the course material and ensure constant revision of the language of the earlier situations

6. A series of recorded exercises to work on at home, at the student's own pace, and to be repeated at will ("Work on your own")

7. Four language games ("Let's have a game") - one for each "Solar System"

8. Tests ("Check your progress") - to be administered after each group of five situations

We found this first course a challenging, rewarding and exhausting experience. Although we had had the benefit of Ms Ogonowski-Rebone's stimulating and enthusiastic introduction of the materials, we had not had the benefit of a training course. As a result, familiarising ourselves with the many aspects of the course materials and developing physical mastery of the audiovisual technique were very time-consuming. We were also unused to the team-teaching approach, which is essential to the success of the course. It was necessary to prepare and plan the teaching of the first ten situations together to ensure that we were able to transfer smoothly from one activity to the next. Coordination and rapport between teachers is particularly important in the early stages, where the stress on relaxation and concentration exercises and development of drama techniques must be successfully introduced to the students. The students must be convinced of the value of these "strange" activities which are designed to prepare them psychologically for, and to assist them in their assimilation of, the new language. If the teachers were not wholeheartedly involved in these activities and convinced of their value in creating a relaxed, receptive, integrated group of students, I doubt that the course would be successful.

We found the detailed "dossiers" of the Teacher's Handbook invaluable in suggesting the sequence of activities and possible teaching approaches. During this first course we followed these suggestions closely.

The situations themselves were interesting, and involved students and teachers alike. Global understanding was achieved due to the audiovisual nature of the presentation. The excellent quality of the film-strip illustrations and the recorded sound ensure this. The students appreciated the humorous content of the situations.

Miming and acting of the situations were very worthwhile, and even the most reserved and inarticulate of the students thoroughly enjoyed these aspects of the work. We were also impressed by the success of these activities in leading students to develop an ability to read the

non-verbal signifiers of language. Silent films enabled the students to draw on the language of previous situations to produce a spontaneous dialogue and also acted as a catalyst to extend vocabulary.

As always, the pace of progress of some students was more rapid than others. We found it necessary to divide the students for certain activities due to differing educational backgrounds, length of exposure to English and aptitude. The slower group required additional intensive oral work on the language of the situations - vocabulary, phonetic work and structural consolidation. However, the other group was ready to progress to other work more quickly, for instance, to the writing of their own alternative dialogues for the situations and written comprehensions on the texts. We found that this recognition of differences was particularly necessary in dealing with "Have a listen in", "Read this", "Work on your own" and "Take your pen". Some of these materials were too difficult for some students and simplification or more detailed treatment was necessary, for instance with "Britain's Balance of Payments".

The course material has a strong British orientation so we had to adapt a lot of the material to the Australian situation, for example, Game I ("Where are you?") needed to be set in Darwin, not in London. However this did not detract from the overall value of the course.

We have recently completed a second All's Well, I course and many of the initial problems have been overcome. The teaching team is convinced of the success of the course because we realise our students have made progress in all areas of the learning process and are eager to continue their learning.

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COPING WITH DIFFERENT LANGUAGE LEVELS

*Alan S. Milne

A typical continuation class has between 10 and 20 students who have joined the class at different times and who find themselves, not by any means in a homogeneous group, but among students of very disparate levels of ability and attainment.

The course being followed in continuation classes is invariably based on Situational English, a highly - structured course. There would appear to be a fundamental incongruity in a system which utilises a structured course like Situational English and yet readily permits, indeed encourages, the admittance of students of any level of attainment into classes at any time during the year. The result, as with any system functioning at cross-purposes with itself, is gross inefficiency: inefficiency as measured in terms of the potential effectiveness and productivity of the course, time (of both teachers and learners), money and materials. No matter how much ingenuity she exercises, one of the most difficult and persistent problems facing the teacher of a large language class is that of providing for adequate individual practice of an appropriate nature. The wide differences in ability and attainment in a typical continuation class only make the problem more acute.

It is, therefore, not surprising that large numbers of students quickly become dissatisfied when their expectations remain unfulfilled and drop out. What surprises me is that large numbers of teachers don't drop out too. But they battle on, trying to meet the needs of newcomers as they arrive - frequently unannounced, and trying to cope with potentially as many different language levels in their classes as there are students. The students who remain battle on also, at one extreme finding the work being done by the class they've just joined quite incomprehensible and, at the other extreme, having attended the class for many months, finding the work repetitious and quite inappropriate to their perceived needs as the teacher strives to cater for all. As an advisory teacher responsible for a large number of continuation classes, I find the situation very

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disturbing. It is a tragedy that so many migrants become so quickly disenchanted with learning English and cease attending classes. Although there is no quick and easy solution to the problem, short of closing all continuation classes, something must be done to alleviate the situation. There seem to be two possible approaches: one from outside the class, i.e. one which involves a change in the organisation of the system, and one from inside the class, i.e. a solution based on modifying the teacher's instructional strategy. Although it is the latter approach which concerns the main topic of this paper, I would like to touch briefly on the former and suggest what might be at least a partial solution to the problem.

Discussing these matters in the February 1977 TEFL/TESL Newsletter,(1) Sue Khyat says:

> There is a need for a complete restructuring of the organisation of classes (.....) There must be a perceivable beginning and end of the course for every student and in the night class situation, using a grammatically structured course I see no way out except to hold students with no English at all until the cycle recommences.

I wholly agree with Sue Khyat that courses should have clearly defined beginnings and ends. For one thing, the feeling of making progress is so important to student motivation. However, her suggestion that students without any English should not be admitted to classes until "the cycle recommences" is too extreme as far as a Situational English course is concerned. A class meeting once or even twice a week for a couple of hours could take well over a year to complete the course. It's a long time to wait.

A more practical solution for some, unfortunately not all, continuation classes would be the bringing together of a number of classes which operate more or less in the same geographical area. Three classes, say, could be held at the one location at the same time and each class could teach a different level of the course. The number of different levels available to the students would be equal, of course, to the number of classes clustered together in this way. I see a combination of three or

four classes as ideal; but even if only two classes operated adjacent to each other it could make for more effective teaching and learning and more efficient utilisation of resources.

Manipulating the locations of classes in this way provides only a partial solution, of course. Many suburban and most country classes are too geographically isolated to be brought into such a scheme. It is with classes like these that an alternative approach to the problem of coping with disparate levels is required: an approach which, as I suggested earlier, involves a change in teachers' classroom management techniques. In short, a change to small group work.

I have been a promoter and advocate of group work, which includes pair-work, for language classes for some years now, but let me quote from a teacher experienced in using group work with large classes:

> The class was divided into seven groups with five students in each, the bright and backward students being distributed more or less equally among the groups. The point to be practised - say conditional sentences - was then explained and demonstrated to the class as a whole, using examples from the students' own experience, as well as from the book. The brighter students were soon responding correctly to such questions as 'If your friend were a doctor, what would he do?' Then the first few sentences of the exercise were done with the class until it was clear that the better students understood what was expected. Then the sentences of the whole exercise were shared out between the groups, each group being given about four sentences to do. There were blackboards all round the classroom so each group was told to write up its sentences on a portion of the board. It is usually best to arrange for one of the more backward students to do the writing. He is then obliged to be an active participant and incidentally gets help with spelling from other members of the group. When the sentences are written up on the board the teacher can spot a mistake at once and see that it is put right. If there is no blackboard space available the sentence can be written in a rough notebook or on butcher's paper, still by the most backward in the group, and the teacher can move quickly from group to group to supervise. As the teacher has to look at eight or nine notebooks

instead of 40 or 45 he is able to see the work of every group, so no mistakes are left uncorrected.

It usually took about ten minutes to do an exercise in this way. After all mistakes had been corrected the students read through the whole exercise from the boards, a different student being called upon to read each sentence.

Chorus reading by groups could be used here if desired. The blackboards were cleaned and a few of the sentences repeated orally.

One of the striking things about this experiment was the popularity of this method. Students never seemed to grow tired of doing exercises in this way.(2)

You probably noted that the groups described by that teacher spent most of their time writing. The explanation for this is that the article from which I quoted was written over twenty years ago. I have quoted from it to emphasise that group work in language classes is not a new phenomenon: its value has been recognised for a long time. It is used in primary and secondary schools. It is used with groups of adults in situations other than language classes. Yet it is rarely used in English classes for migrant adults where, for reasons I shall discuss shortly, it is particularly suitable.

At the Administrative College of Papua New Guinea - where, until twelve months ago, I was lecturing - group work was used widely and, more importantly, with a great deal of success. We believed that the best way to learn a language is to use it and that small group work maximises the opportunities for doing just this is a classroom situation. Not that the old saying "Practice makes perfect" is always true. It is not. Closer to the mark, perhaps, would be "Meaningful practice makes perfect," but even the truth of this is determined, not so much by the quantity of the practice as by the quality. And the quality of language practice is very much enhanced when it occurs in small group situations. This was demonstrated in a recent experiment when student talk in teacher-led discussions was often found to be stilted and artificial, though often grammatically correct. It was when the students were allowed to do the

same work in small groups that there was a marked increase in the variety of what was communicated, as measured in both verbal and non-verbal forms.

There are some distinct advantages in using group work with adult learners of English as opposed to the more conventional and, in South Australia at least, the more widely-used, lockstep system:

1. Because the short-term memory faculty decays as people grow older, teachers of adults should try to reduce to a minimum the amount of conscious memorising that has to be done by adult students. Adults, it has been shown, learn better through being actively involved in the learning process and group work provides the adult learner with a far more active role in the learning process than does a teacher-dominated lockstep system.

2. Adults learn best when learning at their own pace. People working in groups can be self-pacing: people in a lockstep system cannot.

3. Adult learners often complain that they feel they are being treated like children when seated in conventional 'egg-crate' classroom settings. When classes are organised into small groups, the cause of this feeling is eliminated.

4. Adults are less tolerant than children of 'learning for its own sake'. Adults who make the effort of coming to English classes want the language they are taught to be both relevant and useful. In group work, where learners practise their newly-acquired language skills by communicating with perhaps two, three or four other learners, the communicative usefulness of what they are practising is immediately apparent to them.

5. Working in small group situations provides learners with the opportunity of getting instant feedback, something that adult learners look for even more than children do. In a lockstep system, instant feedback in the form of reinforcement or correction is often missing.

There are other advantages in using group work - perhaps the most apparent advantage being that the quantity of communicative language is increased

markedly as compared with the amount possible in a lockstep system. Four groups of five learners, for example, simultaneously practising a newly-taught sentence structure, still take a total of only five minutes lesson time. How much more efficient, and satisfying for the students, this is than the all-too-frequently seen pair of students (or, even worse, student and teacher) practising while the rest of the class inactively observe.

A less obvious, but probably the most important advantage to be gained from discarding the conventional 'straight rows of desks' classroom setting (and the limiting instructional strategies that go with such a setting) in favour of a group work approach is, as I mentioned earlier, the increase in the quality of the language practice. Michael Long, writing in an English Language Teaching Journal recently,(3) gives some very useful information on group work. With regard to group size, for example, he points out that although in larger groups there are more human resources, increased size brings about added problems of intra-group organisation and communication. He adds that there is no reason why groups should be of equal size either. Existing 'natural' groupings among the members of the class based on factors such as nationality, friendship, respect or dislike (which a simple sociometric test can reveal) may be used as bases for organising the class into groups. And, as Long points out, there is no need for such groups to remain constant: they may be allowed to vary from one language task or occasion to another.

I always think it is an asset to have learners from different ethnic backgrounds comprising groups wherever possible. What we, as language teachers, try to teach is, to use the latest catch phrase, communicative competence, that is competence in both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. It does not mean, however, that we should try to teach our students to behave communicatively like anglo-Australians. As we live in a multi-cultural country, it is of fundamental importance that we give our students the opportunity of learning how to interpret and respond appropriately to the wide variety of communication signals that people from different ethnic origins employ. Small group work, when the group consists of mixed nationalities, provides such opportunities.

The actual internal structure of groups needs to be considered also. A

teacher who wishes to use group work in her class should decide, for example, whether each group should have a leader (and the role of leader can change from one task to another) or whether the groups should be leaderless. I personally feel that, for most language learning tasks, to have a learner in each group with the linguistic ability to handle the role of group leader is a definite asset. Apart from making the teacher's task of managing the groups easier, there is evidence to suggest that the learning that occurs in groups with leaders is more effective also. Michael Long, for example, refers to an experiment carried out in Mexico which showed that performance differences between differently structured groups were slight as regards quantity of output, but quality of output, in terms of percentages of student language errors corrected by group members, was higher in groups with leaders. Observation suggested, too, that leaderless groups were rather heavily prone to unequal distribution of language among members.

I should, in concluding, emphasise that I am not suggesting that group work should be the form of classroom organisation used for all kinds of lessons. Individuals working alone, or, alternatively, the whole class functioning as a unit, are quite appropriate for some types of language-learning tasks. What I am suggesting, though is that we, as advisory teachers, should make teachers more aware of the advantages of using group work. We should encourage teachers to modify their classroom strategies and use group work whenever it is appropriate and advantageous to do so - particularly, as I have already suggested, where unstreamed continuation classes are concerned. Almost any type of language activity can be performed by learners in groups, but teachers are quick to recognise ways in which some activities lend themselves more readily to group work than others. Group work is, after all, a means to an end, not an end in itself.

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